

Fruits & Vegetables 101

Frequently Asked Questions to Help Parents Brush Up on the Facts

To be a good role model for children, it's important for parents to know a few basics. Parents can start to lead the way this school year by passing along these facts to their kids. Here's what you and your kids should know about fruits and vegetables.

How many fruits and vegetables should we eat every day?

Recommended Daily Servings of Fruits and Vegetables for Men, Women, and Children			
	Vegetables	Fruits	Total
Children ages 2 to 6	3	2	5
Children over age 6, Teenage girls Active women and most men	4	3	7
Teenage boys Active men	5	4	9

How much is a fruit or vegetable serving?

A serving is smaller than most people think. One serving fits in the palm of your hand.

- 1/2 cup of raw, cooked, canned, or frozen fruits or vegetables
- 1/2 cup of beans or peas
- One medium-sized piece of fruit, such as an apple, orange, plum, or peach
- 1 cup of salad greens, such as lettuce and spinach
- 1/4 cup of dried fruit such as raisins, apricots, and dried cranberries
- 3/4 cup (6 oz.) of 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice

Why are fruits and vegetables so healthy?

Fruits and vegetables are the best source of many vitamins, minerals, and fiber the body needs. For kids, fruits and vegetables provide many nutrients they need to grow healthy and strong. Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables every day as part of a healthy diet also helps reduce the risk of diet-related diseases, such as many cancers, heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure. They're also naturally low in calories and fat, and packed with hundreds of disease-fighting substances called phytochemicals.

Eating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables every day – green, yellow/orange, red, blue/purple, and white – is the best way to make sure you get the most nutrients. Each color is a sign of different nutrients. Only fruits and vegetables, not pills or supplements, can provide all of the benefits these foods contribute to health.

What if my kids don't like certain fruits and vegetables?

The great thing about fruits and vegetables is that they're all good for you. If your kids don't like the taste of something, try another fruit and vegetable from that color group. The most important thing is to eat a variety of different colors of fruits and vegetables. If you try new fruits and vegetables regularly, chances are you'll find something both you and your kids like from each of the color groups – green, yellow-orange, red, blue-purple, and white. Remember that most kids have to try a new food at least three times before they decide if they like it. So don't give up after the first couple of tries. If your kids don't like a vegetable it may be because it's been overcooked. Try steaming it or serving it raw. Kids like vegetables that crunch.